

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1754

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 3845

STADIS//////////

FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHELTON FROM FOX

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCLR, TD, US
SUBJECT: WEST AFRICA-SOUTH AMERICA TRAINING CRUISE

REF: -) STATE 301702; B) USCOMSOLANT 211638Z DEC 77

1. I HAVE STRONG RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE UTILITY IN PROMOTING
U.S. OBJECTIVES OF NAVAL VISIT MENTIONED REFTELS AT
PRESENT STAGE OF US/T&T RELATIONS. THOSE RESERVATIONS REST
ON BOTH POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL GROUNDS.

2. FIRST, THE UNITAS XVIII VISIT WHICH TOOK PLACE IN
NOVEMBER WAS A SUCCESS FROM THE PUBLIC RELATIONS VIEWPOINT
AND IN EXPANDING US CONTACTS WITH T&T COAST GUARD. HOWEVER,
DESPITE EMBASSY EFFORTS TO THE CONTRARY, VISIT WAS VIRTUALLY
IGNORED BY POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN GOTT (MIN OF NATIONAL
SECURITY DONALDSON, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS IN TOWN BUT WAS "TOO
BUSY" TO RECEIVE ADMIRAL SAGERHOLM FOR BRIEF PROTOCOL CALL).
COMING SO CLOSE ON THE HEELS OF UNITAS XVIII, THE
REFERENCED VISIT WOULD, IN OUR ESTIMATION, BE RESISTED
AND AT BEST BE ACCEPTED GRUDGINGLY BY THE GOTT. MORE-
OVER, ACCEPTANCE OF THIS VISIT MIGHT WELL LEAD TO
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REJECTION OF UNITAS XIX, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS SCHEDULED
FOR SUMMER 1978. AS AN ESTABLISHED ANNUAL HEMISPHERIC
EXERCISE, UNITAS VISITS HAVE GENERALLY PROVED ACCEPT-
ABLE TO GOTT AND USEFUL IN PROMOTING US OBJECTIVES.
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO RISK
THE REJECTION OF UNITAS XIX.

3. SECOND, PORT OF SPAIN IS A SMALL, BADLY CONGESTED PORT. PORT FACILITIES CURRENTLY ARE UNDER HEAVY STRAIN, AND THERE IS TALK OF DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR THE PORT, AS WAS DONE FOR THE AIRPORTS. BERTHING FOR A VISIT OF THE PROPOSED SIZE AND DURATION WOULD ONLY ADD TO THE PRESENT CONFUSION, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT THE CHAGAURAMAS DOCKS WILL BE USED FOR OFF-LOADING THE BUILDING SUPPLIES REQUIRED FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S CRASH HOUSING PROGRAM. MOREOVER, WITH THE EXPIRATION OF THE DEFENSE AREAS AGREEMENT ON DECEMBER 31, THE US, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, WILL NO LONGER HAVE RESIDUAL RIGHTS TO DOCKING AT CHAGAURAMAS ON PRIORITY BASIS.

4. WE HAVE NO DIFFICULTY WITH IDEA OF BRIEF, SINGLE-SHIP PORT CALLS FOR BUNKERING AND/OR LIBERTY PURPOSES, BUT THE SCALE OF THIS PROPOSAL SUGGESTS A MAJOR PRODUCTION ALONG SIMILAR LINES TO UNITAS. THEREFORE, IN LIGHT OF THE CONSIDERATIONS MENTIONED ABOVE, EMBASSY URGES THAT THE DEPT EXPLORE WITH DOD WHETHER AN ALTERNATIVE PORT CAN BE CHOSEN FOR REFERENCED VISIT.
FOX

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